

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES RECOVERY TASK FORCE
July 7, 2011

State Coordinator: Tryon McLaney

Attending

Elizabeth Ann Brown	Alabama Historical Commission
Amanda Hill	Alabama Historical Commission
David Cole	Alabama Farmers Federation
Faye May	AIDT (Alabama Industrial Development Training)
Luke Davis	Governor's Office (Policy)
Anne Keller	U.S. EPA
Nisa Miranda	UA Center for Economic Development
Paul Brown	Alabama Cooperative Extension System
Jen Wellock	National Park Service/Dept of Interior (FEMA)
Jessica Burr	FEMA Environmental & Historic Preservation
Kat Hardegen	FEMA Environmental Specialist
Lisa Harris	FEMA ESF14
Sandy Bridges	FEMA Mitigation
John Zakian	FEMA ESF14
Victoria Salinas	FEMA ESF14

Recommended additions to task force and/or include in future meetings

Tribal representatives	Alabama Power
US Fish & Wildlife	Alabama Geological Survey
US Forest Service	University geospatial programs
Alabama Forestry Commission	Alabama Department of Travel & Tourism
Alabama Wildlife Federation	Small Business Administration
Ducks Unlimited	Alabama Library Association
Alabama Dept of Conservation and Natural Resources	Environmental Education organizations (Legacy)
US Geological Survey	Arbor Day Foundation
Watershed preservation groups	Alabama Urban Forestry Association
TVA	Alabama Museums Association

Summary

This was an organizational meeting for the Natural and Cultural Resources Recovery Task Force. Attendees included state and federal historical and environmental protection agencies, agriculture groups, and economic development representatives.

The group discussed damage to historic structures and the challenge presented by lack of historic preservation funding. Existing assessments and partner lists will be solicited and a survey of agency resources will be developed. Local agriculture, farmers markets and developing of products for sale

should be explored. The economic development potential of tourism was seen as a major asset to communities in the areas of:

- Greenways
- Waterways
- Heritage and Historic tourism
- Birding, hiking and passive recreation
- Hunting and fishing
- Agricultural tourism

Emerging Issues

- Stabilization of damaged historic structures that could potentially be saved.
- Communication with the general public through the media of “how-to” information related to recovery, e.g. tree replanting.
- Historic preservation funding is skimpy. Creative approaches are needed.
- Agencies and organizations do not know what resources are available to help their clients and members.
- Existing assessments of damage and/or pre-disaster status need to be compiled.
- Green spaces, outdoor recreation and heritage tourism are powerful economic development tools that should be part of a community’s recovery plan.

Action Steps

- Next meeting July 27, 1:30 p.m. at JFO in Birmingham.
- Create a survey for task force agencies to ask about their current assessments, data and projects. (Jen)
- Obtain existing assessment tools, including Alabama Communities of Excellence.
- Find out if FEMA Public Assistance has assessed or started a project for public cultural facilities like libraries or museums.
- Take quick action to stabilize historic structures that potentially could be saved.
- Obtain information on tax credits for trails, visitor centers and other historic and cultural venues.
- Develop a regular communication from the state to the press with practical recovery information for citizens.
- Find out if any impacted historic structures are already on the PA list.

Meeting Notes

John Zakian (FEMA Resource Coordination Supervisor) described FEMA’s Long Term Community Recovery program. We are on the ground helping communities develop plans, which we are expecting to be complete by August. When things come up in the plan, we will feed it to the task force to help identify resources. We need feedback from the group about whether we’re headed in the right direction. Jon is responsible for coordinating the federal partners in all the RSF categories. Our role is to support and facilitate the state effort led by ADECA.

Victoria Salinas explained the federal effort to improve long-term disaster recovery by better organizing on the state and federal level. The plans are community driven, with the Recovery Task Forces offering resources, expertise, data and analysis. We want to network and support the community goals. State partners are the primary means of implementing the plan and vision of the communities.

Environmental and cultural resources can drive economic development, with walking and hiking trails, “blueways” (water courses) and greenways.

The Department of Interior is doing an assessment of historic properties to see what was the damage, impact and long term consequences.

The Alabama Historical Commission started a database to compile field report information. Unfortunately, for the most part the structures were not damaged but obliterated. There are a few small places that could potentially be saved.

Funding at both the state and federal level for historic preservation is “grim.” Two federal programs that paid for projects have been zeroed out. Listed communities like Cullman and the Pratt City neighborhood could get some help. Home improvement store foundations have supported these projects.

Department of Interior grants are heavy on parks and wildlife, both of which are appropriate for the rural areas that were impacted.

People in Alabama might not know all of the federal programs available. A workshop or resource guide would help. It could be a model for building capacity in the long run. ALFA as a membership organization could promote it to its members.

Some damage assessments have been done. The Forest Service looked at Bibb County and other areas for agricultural damage. There was a question about whether FEMA’s Public Assistance program had assessed any public cultural facilities like libraries.

Outdoor education and environmental education centers are a possibility for some communities.

For historic properties, there needs to be immediate action on stabilizing and preserving buildings that potentially could be saved. Alabama has a law that allows people to request pro-bono services and to release the professional from liability.

Federal EHP funds can be used for memorial kiosks or markers, if a structure cannot be saved.

Some waterways were impacted. Lake Martin had a lot of debris; removal was delayed and has just started. The lake has inundated archaeological sites; we coordinated with EPA and the Corps of Engineers to avoid those areas. EPA also worked to find appropriate disposal sites. In Holt, the riverkeeper organization discouraged bulldozing to avoid putting sediment into the river.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service should have assessments we can use.

Trees: The Extension System has information and publications for short- and long-term projects. They have done a series of workshops for owners of forest property that was damaged. They also dealt with safety concerns when people hiked (with or without permission) through damaged forest property. Birding organizations including the Audubon Society should be included in tree replanting. They could advise on habitats.

Other possible resources are the Alabama Birding Trail, Tree City USA, and the new Alabama Trails Commission. Some projects have just started; this crisis could help accelerate the process and bring in more resources.

There are tax credits available for certain historic projects like trails. For example, a “Textile Industry Trail” could be explored for north Alabama. This has been successful in some other states.

The problem of conflicting regulations and processes was discussed. The Governor has committed to dealing with any conflicts between State and Federal requirements.

There is a need for more coverage in the press of more practical information like tree planting. The recovery stories tend to be more human interest. If the state was sending the information it might get more attention. Could we feed weekly stories? Or the newspapers could donate ad space with advice for citizens. This would also keep attention on the tornado areas.

ADECA is developing a recovery website. When it is operational, it should include links to resources like the Extension System’s publications, videos and other material.

Community recreation for young people, families and seniors is important. Also, walkable communities.

We take a “whole community” approach to planning. We want to make sure the community has the resources to identify issues. If they don’t know (or recognize) a potential asset, how can we help them see it? Peer-to-peer interaction is one approach. Have leaders from different communities talk to each other. FEMA’s technical assistance teams can help them see what the possibilities are.

The Alabama Communities of Excellence program has an assessment process we should look at. Any completed assessments will have valuable information and could serve as a blueprint for our assessments so we don’t have to start from scratch. We should involve ACE in LTCR.

USGS is the go-to agency for mapping of resources.

We need to put together existing assessments. Nisa Miranda suggested the resource group that worked on oil spill issues is a good model. Their list of partners would be a good starting place.

Food and local agriculture as a resource. Extension service says high value, low volume agriculture is a good way for small and beginning farmers to get into the business; low up front investment. There is agri-tourism, linkage to community food supply. Farm Credit Bureau has resources for advertising.

Alfa sponsored “buy fresh buy local” effort. There is a Farmers Market Authority. Rural-urban interface for marketing. A community in another disaster area built a USDA certified kitchen, which prepared food products for sale. These could potentially be built as part of a community center.

We would like to survey agencies to see what information they already have like assessments, analysis and projects. This would help get an understanding of what the issues are and what technical expertise is available. Jen will help do the survey.